

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of New Cumberland

Race Relations

O.H. 57

MR. LESLIE CUPPY

Interviewed

by

Mr. Tom Hess

November 5, 1975

MR. LESLIE E. CUPPY

Mr. Leslie Earle Cuppy was born on May 26, 1892 in Suffolk, Virginia. He is the son of Mr. John and Wortley Holland Cuppy. On October 15, 1924, Leslie married the former Elizabeth Chapman and they presently have two children. Their names are, Iris V. Cuppy who is 50 years old, and Earle C. Cuppy, age 39.

Leslie never went to high school or college and completed only eight years of schooling. He went to work in the brickyard when he was 13, and by the age of 16, he was doing a man's job earning a man's pay.

Although now retired, Mr. Cuppy worked as a farmer and oil lease operator and owner for more than 40 years. During this time, he also worked as a Deputy Assessor of Hancock County, in West Virginia for 30 years.

Mr. Cuppy is very active in his community of New Cumberland. Leslie involves himself in many social functions as well as church organizations. He is a member of the Historical Society of Hancock County and also a Trustee of Swaney Memorial Library in New Cumberland, West Virginia. He served as director of the Farm Bureau for several years and is presently a member of the Junior Order of the United American Mechanics. Mr. Cuppy belongs to the Christian Church of New Cumberland and is a trustee and an elder. He has also served on the church board for 65 years. In 1974, his church presented him with the honor of being chosen as a delegate to the World Christian Endeavor Convention in Essen, Germany.

Mr. Cuppy is very interested in the history of his family background and that of his home town. He has lengthy manuscripts of many details on the town of New Cumberland. Leslie likes to collect items of historical interest and assemble them in a scrapbook. Some of his other hobbies include collecting rocks, minerals, and stamps. These facts stated above, only bring you to the conclusion that for a man of 85 years of age, Mr. Cuppy is a very active and interesting person.

BECKY PAGAC  
September 21, 1977

## YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

## ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE:     LESLIE CUPPY  
INTERVIEWER:     Thomas A. Hess  
SUBJECT:          Race Relations  
DATE:             November 5, 1975

H:     This is an interview with Leslie Cuppy, taken in New Cumberland, West Virginia on November 5, 1975. It concerns his early childhood on a plantation in Virginia.

C:     The story of how I came to be born in Virginia is my dad's sister married a man in Virginia and went down to Isle of White County to live. My dad followed, but they didn't stay together very long because she left him. When she came back up here, my dad remained and married my mother. She was from Nancenond County, Virginia. They lived at, what is called The Goodson Plantation operated by my grandfather, James Holland. He was an overseer of slaves before the war.

During the war my grandfather froze to death. He was also wounded by being shot through the cheek and the bullet came out of his neck. Of course, they didn't have very good medical facilities with them, so he rode two hundred miles back home where a darky woman made herbs and took care of him. She healed his face.

Later, my dad and mother lived there and I was born on this plantation. After we came north, I went back and worked on the plantation. My grandfather's darky came and stayed with him after the war and died on the farm. That slave is buried on the plantation. He thought that my grandfather, who was the overseer of the slaves, had been so good to him that he made his home there. They had

another darky on there who had rented thirty acres of land with a house on it. He farmed and worked it for my grandfather for his rent. I went back later, after we came North, and worked on the farm with my grandfather.

We worked in the peanut fields, and in the corn fields. We also used to strip the fooder. I helped my grandfather out while I was there. Of course this darky used to kid me a whole lot. He would work there with me when he worked for my grandfather. Whenever we got thirsty, instead of going to get water, we would go to the watermelon patch, bust open a watermelon and eat the center. It would have to be a big watermelon to quench our thirst. We would throw the rest of the watermelon to the hogs. My grandfather raised cotton, but his main crop was the peanut crop for his money. He also raised a good many hogs.

- H: Do you remember where this plantation was? Could we locate it today?
- C: It's eight miles to the back of Suffolk, Virginia. It's in Wancumond County and it's about a mile from what used to be an Exit at that time. It is a little country village with a few houses, a store, a post office, and a grist mill.
- H: Is this pretty close to the North Carolina border?
- C: Well, yes, Suffolk is about eight miles from the North Carolina line.
- H: Was it right in the heart of the south?
- C: Yes, right in the heart.
- H: Do you remember any stories that your grandfather told about taking care of these slaves?
- C: He used to tell me that he had to look over the slaves in case they would do something wrong. I don't remember the man he worked for but they would send him to this shed to be whipped. He said he was making a racket, and he was screaming and hollering. However, he said, that he never touched the slave or the girls either. They all seemed to like him and that is the reason this one darky, when he had no home to go to after he was free, came and stayed with grandfather until he died.
- H: On the plantation where you were born, and later worked, were there just two families of black people there?
- C: Well, there was just one family, and one darky who never married. He stayed single and they all liked him. My

mother and sisters all liked him.

H: Do you remember your grandfather telling about what outfit he was with or what he did in the war?

C: He was in the Virginia cavalry. One of the few things he told me was the Northern cavalry and the Southern cavalry charged one another, and it was the hardest work he had ever done in his life. When they came together, his horse was wedged between two northern horses. He said he didn't want to be killed and that he had to fight both men off with his sword.

H: What is the date of your birth?

C: May 26, 1892.

H: When you worked on the farm, about how old were you?

C: I was about fifteen years old when I worked on the farm.

H: Fifteen, then that would make it about 1907 or 1908?

C: The world's fair was in Jamestown, Virginia at that same time.

H: This was a real plantation. You have probably seen or heard how plantation life was pictured in the movies like Gone With the Wind. Was this plantation, with its main house and outbuildings, something like that?

C: No, they didn't have so many out buildings there. They had the kitchen set off from the house and they had another out building, in which they did their washing. Later, one of my cousins had a sweet potato drying house, too.

H: What was the sweet potato drying house?

C: Well, the farmers brought their sweet potatoes there. Sweet potatoes won't keep if you just dig them out like you do Irish potatoes. You have to dry them. They would bring them to this house which was built with lumber. You'd build a fire down there and here went up through the bins where you'd dry these sweet potatoes. This is to preserve them.

H: You mentioned that this kitchen was a little bit off from the rest of the house. Do you mean it was in a separate building by itself?

C: Yes, just a kitchen by itself. I suppose it was twenty-

five to thirty feet from the main building.

H: Was it separated from the main building? Was there any special kind of cooking that they did out there, or did they just do all of the cooking at this building?

C: No, they did all the cooking out there. One nice thing was that my grandmother always had warm biscuits for our breakfast and dinner. I was back there, once, later in the wintertime just for a visit. We would take those biscuits, butter them up, and then eat them by the open fireplace. She would put coffee on there to keep it warm, and we would sit around there. We'd eat supper there about seven or eight o'clock, right there by the big log fireplace.

H: Was the house heated by log fires?

C: Yes, they had a great big fireplace in the main living room. Of course my grandfather was quite feeble because he was pretty old. In one of the back rooms they had a stove there, a wood stove that you put logs in.

H: What was the main house like?

C: It was a one and a half story. It was two big rooms downstairs and a couple upstairs. The upstairs rooms were in a V-shape. It had a little front porch, which was not very big, and a side door. The foundation was rail-skewed. Huge logs were on one side. I know they put electricity in later.

H: Was this house like most of the other houses around that community? Were they all built on that same pattern?

C: Yes, most of them were on the same pattern.

H: Now, you have mentioned the kitchen was separate, did you eat out in the kitchen, mostly?

C: Yes, we always ate in the kitchen. We would all eat out in the summer.

H: Was all the work on the farm done with horses or mules?

C: They had a mule and a plow. I remember when I was first plowing there I made a mess of it. They also had a buggy horse.

H: How many acres were there on this plantation?

C: I don't remember how many acres. I know, one time when I worked there we harvested about twenty-five acres of peanuts.

- H: Were there other crops besides the peanuts?
- C: Yes, we had watermelon, corn, and potatoes. One year I was there we had a big turnip patch, too.
- H: Were these other vegetables and watermelons for sale at one of the towns?
- C: Yes, they were for sale. We fed the pigs watermelon. Sometimes the vegetables and fruit were shipped north.
- H: What town was the market located in?
- C: Suffolk was the closest town.
- H: You have told about one black man and a black family that were right there on the farm. One of the things that interests us very much is the relationship between the white people and the black people. You have told about your grandfather's relationship with them. Did you ever see white people and black people mingling together in Suffolk or someplace else?
- C: No, they always kept apart. The colored people there, if you have any actually working for you, ate at a different table. They ate and drank in the kitchen, but at a different table than the white people. I have never seen a black and white man sit down at the same table. At that time the darky kept his place.
- H: Were there other separation methods besides where they ate, the expression you used, they kept their place? Were there other ways that they continued this sort of separation, for example at church?
- C: They had their own churches and at that time their own schools. Their schools were as good or even better than white schools, but they never mingled together. In the streetcars, they set aside the last three or four seats in the back for the colored people. The colored people kept their place, they didn't come up to the white section and the white people didn't go back there either.
- H: Did you ever run into a situation where there were more colored people than could sit in those back seats, what would happen then?
- C: I would know because I usually rode the train. They had certain cars on the train for black people. I remember I had an uncle who was a United States Marshal and I



went with him to take prisoners to the penitentiary. They would sit in a different place than he did. He would go back and forth and watch them.

H: Do you mean if he had black prisoners they would be in one car and he would be in another car?

C: Yes, and he would go back and forth to watch them

H: He would be separated from his prisoners?

C: Yes, he would.

H: Did they have any events such as a county fair, a community fair, or a Fourth of July celebration.

C: No, I don't remember anything like that.

H: I was just wondering how the black people and the white people might have mixed at that particular time.

C: When they had that World's Fair, I suppose the blacks went the same as the whites. Only difference was they would have their separate places to eat. They wouldn't eat with the white people. They had different restaurants, also. Usually they would have a waitress who would be colored.

H: Did the black waitresses wait on the white people?

C: Yes, they would be waiting on the white people.

H: Did they used the same banks? Did they put the black people's money and the white people's money together in the same banks?

C: Oh yes, they would do that.

H: Was this before automobiles?

C: Yes, long before.

H: Did you ever see a black person who didn't want to keep his place, the expression that you have used?

C: Well, in those days they all kept their place. It wasn't like it is today. I was there on the first day of January, and the colored people had a parade in Suffolk, which I saw. It was their emancipation day, I think they called it. It was their freedom from slavery and they were celebrating it. They had a nice parade, and they paraded right through the main streets of Suffolk, right where

the white people lived, too. I remember a darky came along riding a steer right in the middle of the parade.

- H: The first of January was the day of the effectiveness of the Emancipation Proclamation, this is what they were celebrating. They had their own parade, so they must have had policemen and sheriffs there.
- C: Oh yes, they had policemen out there.
- H: Did you see any black policemen or black sheriffs?
- C: No, I never saw a black policeman.
- H: Did you go to school during the years that you were down there?
- C: No, I didn't go to school at all then.
- H: I was just wondering what it was like in the schools down there. Did you say that the blacks had their own school building?
- C: Yes, they had their own schools. The only black in the Christian church was a black janitor. He was very nice and he took care of the church.
- H: Were there some black people around that community that had been slaves themselves?
- C: Most of the older people had been slaves.
- H: Did you ever have a chance to talk to any of them about their experiences as slaves?
- C: No, I didn't.
- H: Did your grandfather ever tell you about events or things that happened other than the matter of discipline with the master's daughters?
- C: No, that is the only thing that he ever told me. He said that he never whipped one of them and that he never whipped one of the daughters. However, he thought that he had murdered him because when he yelled and hollered it sounded as though he had murdered him.
- H: It was probably some sort of playacting for the benefit of the master. Were these men, that worked on the plantation for your grandfather paid in cash?
- C: No, one man rented thirty acres with his house on it. He worked his rent out on the farm and he raised peanuts

and potatoes. Actually, he raised his living right there on that thirty acres because it was part of the plantation.

H: Was he what is considered a sharecropper?

C: Yes they called him a sharecropper, although my grandfather never took any of his crops; they were all his. The only thing he did was work for his rent.

I don't know whether or not grandfather ever had him pay extra. He worked on grandfather's land and whatever he raised on those 30 acres was his. That was also part of his living.

H: How much of a family did he have?

C: I don't remember. He had a few kids, but I don't remember how many children.

H: Did these children, that would be the younger black generation, act any differently towards white people than what you observed in the older generation?

C: No, they kept their place just the same. They were taught that. There is one thing though, the black people were very superstitious. You would hear them singing or something going on at night in which they would be making a noise to scare the spooks away.

H: Did the white people try to take advantage of this superstition, maybe some of the white boys?

C: Some of the white boys, I don't know if they did.

H: The bachelor that lived in with your grandfather, the black man, how was he paid?

C: I don't know that, I was never told. They all liked him. They would even bring him in sometimes. Occasionally, they would have some coloreds there. He would work there with them, but he wouldn't come in.

H: Would he stay outside the building?

C: Yes, he would stay outside and work with them and he wouldn't come in.

H: Did they have anything at Christmas time or Thanksgiving where the white people and black people would be together?

C: I don't remember any. I know one Christmas or one New Year's, I went to date a girl, and I got right into a

party. They put up fireworks for New Year's, but they never got together any other time that I can remember.

H: They just more or less had their separate societies that they lived in, and this is in the early 1900's?

C: Yes.

H: You lived all through those years and have observed the changes. This is just an observation, but when do you think that the big change took place? When did the black people mix and mingle more with the white people?

C: Well, that hasn't been very many years ago. Just in these later years it has come about. Up north, of course they mingled more. In the south they kept their place, until now.

H: We talked about your grandfather being in the service, was that during the Civil War?

C: Yes, it was during the Civil War.

H: When he was in the Army of Northern Virginia, was he an officer?

C: No, he was an enlisted man.

H: Was he a non-commissioned officer, a sergeant or maybe a corporal?

C: Not that I know of, if he was, I don't know it.

H: During the first World War, where were you?

C: I was in New Cumberland.

H: You lived in New Cumberland, West Virginia?

C: I was in the first draft, the first World War, but I was called back and they classified me as fourth class because my mother was a widow. They just started taking them out of the fourth class when the war ended. Some were called up and some of them got to camp and just turned around to be sent home.

H: I was interested in the way that black people were being treated by the time of the first World War. This was ten years after you had lived there on the plantation. Could you say that there was any difference?

C: Well, I couldn't say that because I wasn't there.

H: Here in West Virginia, where you lived, were the black people treated any differently than they were down there

in Virginia?

- C: Yes, during the war there were never really very many black people in New Cumberland. After the war there was one black man who was brought up here and he spent all his life there; he worked up there. New Cumberland, for a long time, never had any black people. The men were scarce and business was going pretty good. They brought them by the carload here, but a lot of them didn't stay long. They would go up north to get a job and then as soon as they could, they'd go into Pittsburgh. They brought carload after carload of them up.
- H: Who was importing, so to speak, these black people here to work?
- C: Mack Manufacturing Company, that's a brickyard.
- H: Was this during the first war, about what years would you say?
- C: It was during and after the first World War. It must have been somewhere around 1920. I just don't remember the right day.
- H: Well, that's close, we are just trying to show how things have changed. Could you describe how Mack did this? Did they have somebody to line these people up, a recruiter?
- C: I forget the man's name that went down and got them to bring them here. Some of them are pretty nice colored people. Some of them were smart alecks, but that was in 1920. I was a Boiler Fireman for seven years. I left in 1925 to work in the oil fields of Hancock County.
- H: I am really interested in the recruiting of bringing these black people north. You said, Mack had a man that was in charge of this sort of thing?
- C: Yes, he had a man in charge and he looked after them.
- H: Oh, he looked after them here?
- C: Yes, they would go around and put them in houses which we scattered around up above New Cumberland.
- H: Where did they go to recruit?
- C: I don't know just exactly where, but down through the South somewhere.
- H: I thought maybe you might've heard one of these men say, "I was from Richmond" or "I was from Louisville."

- C: No, I never heard them say.
- H: Did the black men bring their families with them?
- C: Not very many of them, mostly they came alone. They brought some women with them to cook for them. A few had their wives with them. I had one who had no children and couldn't read nor write. Neil was a nice old man and he could preach. He was bald headed and he would put his head around the door to look at you. I thought he looked like a baboon. His wife would read to him and he would go to a colored church in Toronto, Ohio with a colored person and preach on Sunday afternoon. He would work in the morning real hard and then go over there. He could give a pretty good little talk, but he couldn't read nor write at all.
- H: Was this common among most of the black people that came up?
- C: I wouldn't like to say because I don't know. I know that he couldn't read but his wife could. She always gathered greens, but I would call them weeds. She would bring him a warm dinner everyday.
- H: Did she bring it right up to the brickyard?
- C: Yes, right into the boiler house. She came there one day and I asked her to tell me about her greens. I teased her about her greens and she sat down and told me every green in that basket.
- H: The other younger man that you characterized as a smart-aleck, was he educated?
- C: No.
- H: About how many helpers did you have on the boiler during these seven years?
- C: I suppose in seven years I must have had a dozen. I had both white and black.
- H: Oh, you had some white people working for you?
- C: I had one colored man that they brought up there who had a disease and he couldn't hardly do the job. He left here and went back south. I was told after that a doctor down there cured him. They couldn't cure him here.
- H: Do you recall what the disease might have been?

- C: I wouldn't even like to mention it.
- H: Approximately how many black people do you think Mack might have brought up?
- C: Oh, I suppose a hundred to a hundred fifty total and this was every time.
- H: How many years did this importing go on?
- C: I don't think it lasted more than a year to a year and a half.
- H: It happened during the war?
- C: Yes, that's right.
- H: As you mentioned, in New Cumberland there are no blacks today. After a short time, were they mostly all gone from Mack?
- C: All gone, yes.
- H: I know you can't look into their heads or anything like that, but why would you say they left here? You told about them having the homes that Mack provided for them and their women being with them, so why did they leave?
- C: They just didn't want to stay, I guess. A lot of them went to Pittsburgh to work in the mills up there. A lot of them wouldn't be here very long before they would skedaddle to Pittsburgh. Of course, they had their way paid here and it wasn't very hard for them to get enough money to go to Pittsburgh.
- H: Were they paid more in Pittsburgh?
- C: I don't know. Well, maybe they did pay a little bit better.
- H: What kind of pay were these men getting, such as the guy that was helping you on the boiler? What kind of pay would he be getting?
- C: Well, at that time probably a \$1.45 a day.
- H: What did you work, 10 hours?
- C: Well, they worked 10 hours and the boiler man worked 11 to 13 hours because there was only two of them. He could have his day done, maybe, at three o'clock or four. We didn't get done until five.
- H: He got a \$1.45 for roughly a 10 hour shift. Was he on an hourly rate or a day rate?

- C: No, he was on a day rate.
- H: At this same time can you remember what groceries were costing here in New Cumberland so we can see how much buying power a \$1.45 had?
- C: No, I can't remember that but it was a lot cheaper. Even before the brickyards first started, pork was two or three cents a pound. Five cents could purchase a pound of beef. Of course, at that time things were fine, but then you worked a month for ten dollars way back in the beginning. They could receive board or they got sixteen dollars a month without getting board.
- H: Were these white workers?
- C: No, this was in later years. This was in the early days of the brickyard, around the war days. They might have gotten a little bit more. I know when I first went to the brickyard, I got fifty cents a day. I was sixteen years old and I was doing a man's job. I got \$1.45 a day that was ten cents more than what the laborer got. The laborer got \$1.35.
- H: Were these laborers married men?
- C: Well, some of them were.
- H: Did they work six days or five days?
- C: They worked six days.
- H: Six days at \$1.35 is not very much pay to take home at the end of the week.
- C: I had three boarders up there. I forget what I started out earning, but when I quit I was only getting \$5.65 a day.
- H: \$5.65, and this was in 1924 or 1925, right?
- C: Yes, most of this big money came after the second World War. They did get a little more money before that, but after the second World War they just kept raising it and raising it and it never stopped.
- H: In 1918, this blackman wheeling ashes for you at the brickyard was getting \$1.45. What if a white man wheeled ashes for you, did he get the same?
- C: Yes, that didn't make any difference if he was black or white as far as wages was concerned.



- H: Do you happen to remember if there was a law to that effect then, or whether that was the way Mack ran his brickyard?
- C: It was just the way Mack ran his brickyard. There was no law that I know of.
- H: Do you remember any events or incidents between the white men and the black men that worked there at the brickyard? Did they seem to get along?
- C: Oh, they got along pretty good. One incident, that I remember, I felt sorry for him too, was when he had an argument with a man and he went home to get his gun. He didn't shoot at him, but he shot down at his feet.
- H: Now who had the gun? Was it a black man?
- C: Yes, it was the black man who had the gun. They arrested him and gave him six months in jail for having that gun. There is one other case that I remember. There was a white man and he was a foreigner. He didn't believe in banks and he carried \$400.00 right there in his shirt. They kept telling him to put it in the bank. Well, they had a big kiln up there. It is gone now; it was an experiment kiln and they never used it very much. Anyway, this man was coming to work one morning and he didn't get to work. About noon he came crawling out of that kiln. Somebody stopped him and they began to talk with him. They hit him in the head when he was going to work that morning. This colored man got very sick up there, left to go home, and kept following him I suppose he was trying to get that \$400.00, if he could. The foreigner had already put the money in the bank and he didn't get it.
- H: Were there any rules or anything regarding where the white people and black people ate here in New Cumberland? In the local restaurant or anything of this nature?
- C: No, they never had any different places. I don't know whether the black people ever ate very much down town. They kept to themselves.
- H: They still seemed to be keeping pretty much to themselves?
- C: Yes.
- H: We had a streetcar through here then, didn't we?
- C: No, you had to go across the river to get it.

- H: Would that be in Ohio?
- C: Yes, it would.
- H: Could one of the black men from Mack's go across the river and sit anyplace on the streetcar there?
- C: He could in the northern states.
- H: Did West Virginia and Ohio both have the same rules in 1918?
- C: Yes, as far as that is concerned. I didn't know that they made any different rules.
- H: Did white people from Virginia, where the rules of race difference were practiced when they visited in this area, seem to have any trouble getting along with the black people that were just mixed in?
- C: Well, they never mingled with them because they never had to. A few of them came up here, like their mother and sister came up several times. Several of them came up, but at that time it was open. In later years one black man worked for my father-in-law, but we treated him very kindly. He would come out to my place all the time. He died, and he had a grandson who came here for a while, who built a house on the back road. He pulled out and went down to Weirton.
- H: Weirton isn't so far away. We know pretty much about what happens if there are any problems in Weirton or anything like a riot. Can you recall any rules about separating the black people and the white people existing in Weirton?
- C: Well, back maybe a few years ago. However, I don't know about other years.
- H: You were active in the community, so you would have heard or read in the newspaper by 1920. There was radio then. When did you get your first radio?
- C: It was March of 1925. I had a radio, although I wouldn't get it until about 1926 because my father-in-law wanted to move back to town. We moved into his house and we had an electric Delco System. I bought a Delco radio.
- H: A lot of people don't know what a Delco System is. Can you tell us what it is?
- C: Well, we had sixteen batteries in the cellar. I had a generator and a gas engine. They had two balls in it.

I charged them up and the balls were very clear. I would usually fill the tank up and start it up. When it ran out of gas, it quit. In the morning, whenever the first ball went down in the first jar, I would start the engine up to fill it up. It was 32 volts and we had lights. This is how we churned out butter and ground our sausage. I also got this radio that had a battery which went along with it. Later, I got a little combination generator and motor that had helped boost it up to 110. That was the first radio that I ever had.

H: After 1926 you would've been in on the news and so forth. You have given us a lot of good insight on the way black people were received here. You have stated that it was probably after the second World War that the conditions became different. Before we would jump up to the second war, let's take a look at the relationship during the Depression because people's attitudes and habits changed during the Depression. Did you live out on the farm between New Cumberland and Weirton at that time?

C: It isn't between New Cumberland and Weirton; it was back in the country.

H: Weirton is the big town around, isn't it? How did the Depression hit here?

C: Well, people got thrown out of work. What happened can be blamed on the Republican Party. When Collidge was in they pushed everything; the Depression was going to come sooner or later. After the boom, after the war, there is always a boom after the war. The Depression came later when Hoover was in. A lot of people blamed Hoover for the Depression but I don't myself, because they pushed everything, filled the shelves up, and there was over-production. There was no outlet for it and, of course everything stopped. When work stopped, people were layed off.

H: When did the real shock come?

C: 1929 was when the crash came, that is when it started.

H: Is that when men started getting thrown out of work? Was it worse right at the beginning or did it just sort of go down hill gradually, and get worse by 1932?

C: Yes, it kept getting worse all along. It was pretty sharp right from the beginning. You had the Hoover administration and then Roosevelt got in and started the WPA. That helped out and then he closed all of the banks, some of them never did reopen. Finally things started up again and then finally we got out of it.

- H: Were Negro people living in Weirton in 1929?
- C: Oh, yes.
- H: Was it a large group of them?
- C: I don't know how many of them, but there were a good many colored people there.
- H: They worked mostly at the steel mill, right?
- C: Yes.
- H: Were they in any way distinguished because of their color with regard to where they worked or the amount of pay that they got?
- C: I don't think so. I don't know for sure, but I don't think that made any difference in pay.
- H: Can you recall anything that happened at the beginning of the Depression, that would show that things were any different for them than it was for white people?
- C: I couldn't do that. All I know is that the people were pretty hard hit at that time.
- H: Everybody was just about hit the same way, then?
- C: Yes.
- H: You talked about the banks closing and some of them never reopening. Were you thinking of a particular bank that didn't open?
- C: No, I wasn't thinking of any particular bank. Roosevelt shut the banks down for a little while to reorganize them. I don't know what the reason was. Then he started the WPA, so the banks began to open up and we started to pick up again. For a while, there were a lot of projects that were going on. I don't think that they paid them very much, but I know that we hauled hay into the clay mill for the mules to get all the clay out. They were working on that new dam.
- H: Was this the WPA working on the roads? What other things around here can you remember that the WPA did? Did they have anything to do with building any of the buildings here in town?
- C: No, they built a sewer up in New Cumberland and someplace else, I saw roadwork. I don't know whether or not it was in town.

- H: How did somebody get on WPA? How did you qualify for it or who did you have to apply to?
- C: I don't really think that you did have to apply. I remember someone out here that worked at the brickyard was in charge, but how they got on I don't know.
- H: The brickyards were the big thing here in New Cumberland. Did the brickyards close down too?
- C: They slowed down somewhat. It was just about that time that the brickyards had begun to fade out. The pavements stopped and they got concrete and blacktop. That is what killed the brick yards, concrete and blacktop.
- H: By this time all of the black people were gone from New Cumberland. They had either gone into Pittsburgh, like you said, or gone back down to Weirton to work at the mill. Did some of them go back to their homes in the South?
- C: Yes, some of them went back to the South. I think that they had colored people working on the WPA too.
- H: Have there been any race problems in New Cumberland or right around New Cumberland?
- C: Not here, however, I understood, at one time, that there was supposed to be a lot of them coming in, but that was blocked before they got here. That is just hearsay.
- H: You talked about paving brick, some people might think that a brick is a brick. Since you were right there in the brickyard could you describe a little bit about the different kinds of bricks that they made?
- C: They made a wire cut that was put in the bottom of the kiln, because the bottom of the kiln didn't burn quite as hard as it did on the top. They put about seven rows high of bricks. Then they put their pavement brick above that. They had to stand a test and they would take out, I think, eight bricks that ran through this machine. They weighed them and ran them through this machine to see how much of it wore off by an hour. That is the way they judged the percentage of loss on the pavement. The first brick pavement in the United States was in New Cumberland, on Ridge Avenue. Now all of it, but part of it. Charleston, West Virginia claims that it was first. It was the first commercial brick. I think those bricks were donated for this pavement.

H: About what year was that?

C: That would be way back in the early 1800's. I don't have a record of what time that was done, but I know that it was around that time.

H: Is there some reason that the brick industry is so concentrated right in this area on both sides of the river?

C: This is where it was first developed. The first bank was opened by John Gamble down at Mud Point. A man, by the name of Freeman took the clay to Pittsburgh to make the brick. We had no railroads in here then and they went to Pittsburgh to make the brick. They got the idea to build the brickyard right where the source of material was. They had coal and they had plenty of wood to burn the brick. A man by the name of James Porter, went down there and started a brickyard. Freeman came in later and started his. There was just one after another from Kings Creek to, what we call, Black's Island was solid. We used to call it "Brick Bend" and that is where my grandfather got the idea to start a town. He saw that the brickyards were going to be there so he started the town of New Cumberland in 1839. He laid out 40 lots, sold them, and he named the town Vernon.

H: Is the history of New Cumberland tied directly to your family?

C: Yes, and he started to lay out 50 more lots. Then the people of New Cumberland wanted the name changed. They talked it over and decided on New Cumberland as the name of the town. That is the way it got it's name.

He owned from Harden's Run clear up to Deepbut Run and then back to Cenerty Road. He sold those off and a man by the name of Campbell owned from there down to Black Horse. It was a pipe shop at one time and they turned it into a brickyard. He then started to lay out lots. There were two men, by the name of Boyle and Gamble who layed out the back road.

H: Let's get back to our brick business here before we get too far away from it. You said, from King's Creek, now that is right on the outskirts of Weirton today. Then you gave us a northern end to that. What did you call that northern end?

C: Black's Island. They did away with Black's Island.

H: Was it New Cumberland?

- C: No, Black's Island.
- H: No, the new dam you said. What dam would that be?
- C: The New Cumberland Dam. The new dam is there now. That is where the last brickyard was, straight across from that island. It was the pipe shops or brickyard.
- H: Is there more than 10 miles of river front?
- C: It's probably 10 miles or more.
- H: How many brickyards can you count in that 10 miles?
- C: Well, I can remember the brickyards, myself. Of course there were more than that because some of them faded out.
- H: Maybe you ought to start at the north end and kind of name them down because the names might mean something to us.
- C: Globe Brick Work, that was the first one.
- H: Is that the same Globe Brick that we have today?
- C: That is part of it. It burned down and they never rebuilt it. They have the Rocky Side next, then you come to The Union. The next brickyard was The Etny. There was also The Clifton. There was the Creston Brickyard and the Clifton Pipe Shop, that composed the upper end in town.
- H: The pipe shop was clay pipe wasn't it?
- C: Yes, there were two pipe shops. The Eagle was a pipe shop too, that was above Etny town. When we started down there we had the Black Horse to push the pipes up and they sold it to the American Pipe Company. They turned it into a brickyard. There was the Claymont, the Freeman, and Porter had some works down there. Also, there was the Slidelow Pipe Shop that belonged to the Mack Company.
- H: There are some names in there that are still around. That Porter, is that connected with H. K. Porter Clay Company today?
- C: No, that is another company. This was John Porter, he bought a lot of these out and the Mack Company bought him out. Eventually he went up and started the brickyard that is up the river heading north of New Cumberland and near Newell.

- H: There was an awful lot of brick made right here within about 10 miles, Concerning our raw materials, such as wood, coal, and clay, where did the clay come from?
- C: They came from a mine right out of the hills.
- H: Was it right out of hills in back of the brickyards?
- C: Yes, you had a brickyard and then a bank, a clay bank.
- H: Was a clay bank a mine?
- C: Yes, that was a clay mine. Whatever you want to call it. They called them clay banks, but it was really a mine.
- H: Each one of the companies would have their own mine in the hillside right here. How far away was Porter's mine from his yard?
- C: It was right along the hill in back of the yard.
- H: Was it right in back of it on the same property?
- C: Yes, a vein of clay goes right through there.
- H: Is this clay special in some way, in that it will make the product they wanted special? This clay is not somplace else, such as in Wisconsin or eastern Pennsylvania, is it?
- C: I don't know about Wisconsin, but it's over in Ohio. On the other side of the river, there were brickyards and pipe shops all through there and they are all gone now. I remember them and the only difference is that the clay dips were over there. They had to pump their mines, whereas here it was right on top of the hill line. There were two clay mills to ground the clay. My father-in-law had one right here in New Cumberland, it was in back of the church. This was the Balentine Clay Mill and it was owned by the Balentine brothers. They would grind the clay in the mill, grinding clay for the mills, and they also made clay for plaster.
- H: Then you would say, the reason the clay here kept the companies so close was because it was so easy to get?
- C: Yes.
- H: It didn't require the added expense of pumping the mine and reasing the clay up out the lower vein. It dips from east to west. It's higher on the east side of the river than it is on the west side of the river. When you get over the ridge to the east, as you would go,



toward Burgettstown does that clay vein run out or dip down again?

- C: As far as I know it is probably still over there now. A lot of clay is still in there yet. Now there is only one problem, there was a row there that was nothing but solid rock. White sandstone, you might call it. It took them seven years to go through it up here at two different places along the brickyard. They cut through that solid rock with clay behind it and drilled down in the back of the mine. Here you can get around it, but the Etny went around it because they went in back of the hill and stepped down. My father-in-law went around it over here, but after you get down this way, it drops down below the clay.
- H: After you go south a little bit, does the sandstone get out of the road, itself?
- C: It;s all solid, you don't even have to crib it or anything you just put it in. You can tunnel right through it.
- H: That is interesting. Raw materials are very important. The second raw material you mentioned was wood. How was the wood used in the brick work?
- C: When I was working there , we burned coal, but using wood was before my time. They used to use a lot of wood for burning. Then they got the coal. There is a pretty good supply of coal around here.
- H: Was the heat necessary for the kilns for the curing of the brick?
- C: It dried the brick in buildings. First, they would dry the brick in big drying sheds and sometimes in the sun. In later years they got the steam tunnels, and they would dry them with steam. In the daytime the engine would pump steam in there that kept the pipes hot. Then at night, the night fireman's job was to keep the steam up and keep these dryers warm. This way the bricks could be made quicker. The bricks that would be made today would be put in the kiln tomorrow.
- H: After the bricks were made they had to be taken away from here to all the different places they were used. How was this done?
- C: Well, in the early history of the brick business there were keel boats that floated down the river. They were cheap and the carpenters made them here, in town. You had to be pretty skilled to handle those boats and they

had men on them to handle them. They floated them down to Cincinnati, Ohio, and then on to St. Louis. Sugar people of Louisiana bought a lot of brick, but that was before the steam boat days. There wasn't any railroad in here either until 1886, I believe a railroad came to New Cumberland.

H: Up until 1886 then, was it mostly river freight?

C: Yes, that's right, everything was river.

H: What if they wanted to take brick to Pittsburgh? Did they take them up stream?

C: They would take them by pulling them with horses and poles. It used to take two days to come from Wheeling to New Cumberland with one of those loads.

H: Two days to come from Wheeling to New Cumberland, that is about 50 miles on the water isn't it? Then Pittsburgh would be about 100 miles by water wouldn't it?

C: It probably would be.

H: So, you are figuring four or five days up there?

C: I know that they took the clay up there. I really don't know how they did get it up there unless it was the same way. They began to use the steamboats and tow boats and they began to tow it. You take Ridge Avenue, that was solid timber at one time.

H: They built boats and things like that out of the timber. Your relationship and knowledge of the way black people were treated there on that one particular plantation, in the very heart of the south was enlightening. How they were treated here in New Cumberland and what little time they were in here had been discussed. We have talked about two sets of grandparents. It's your maternal grandparents that had the plantation right?

C: Yes, that was my mother's side.

H: Then your paternal grandparents were the ones that had the city here. They helped to lay out the town.

C: Yes, that's right.

H: What was the family name of the family in Virginia that had the plantation?

C: James A. Holland

H: Is that the grandfather that owned the plantation?

- C: He rented it first and his son, who had a store in Portsmouth, bought the plantation. It was owned by a Northerner then, and he went to Norfolk and started the Standard Fence Company.
- H: So, your grandfather lived on this plantation, but he didn't own it?
- C: He never did own it himself, but his son bought it.
- H: Was this your uncle?
- C: Yes, but still my grandfather ran the farm.
- H: The family name here in New Cumberland would be Cuppy. What is your father's first name?
- C: My father's first name was John and my grandfather was John Cuppy.
- H: Were they the ones that owned the property that was first divided up for the town here?
- C: Yes.
- H: Would you like to add any further remarks?
- C: Les, my uncle had a darky boy. I don't know how he came to have the boy at all, but he raised him. Everytime he went fishing or something like that, he took the boy with him. He grew up to be a man on the farm. The day that my uncle died they were out fishing. He had a heart attack in the boat, and almost fell out. The darky managed to catch him and hold him in the boat and the day of the funeral that darky was taking it harder than anyone else there. Of course, he had raised the boy from childhood.
- H: There was a great deal of love and closeness between the two men. About what are the years of this so we can get an idea of how far we are removed from slavery?
- C: It might have been ten years ago that this happened.
- H: Are you referring to his death?
- C: Yes, I don't remember the time exactly, but I do know that he took it harder than anyone there.
- H: That relationship would've started, maybe, fifty years before that right?
- C: Probably not that long, I don't know exactly when it started or how he came to have this boy. Actually, he wasn't a slave then, he was just like a boy in a way.

We worked on the farm and he treated him just like his own boy. He would even take him out fishing.

H: Do you know if he was paid or anything?

C: I don't know that. Oh, I imagine that probably he was because they paid wages in those days. He probably paid him for his work, but I know that he kept him.

H: When you say that he kept him, did he live in the main house or did he have his own home?

C: He had his own room. I don't know if it was in the main house or not. I don't think he had any outside buildings at that time, but he had his own room.

H: Was this black man married?

C: Not then, but I think he has been married since. I don't know whatever became of him after my uncle died and they split up the farm. He was a man by that time.

H: Thank you, that helps us to understand a little bit more about the closeness that existed between people who lived in the south, grew up in the south, and had blacks close to them in their lives.

C: Well, they treated them pretty good there. I know my people did. My aunt who was 90 when she died, had a darky lady that would come and help her in her home. She worked for her and she was in about her 70's or something like that. When my aunt died she didn't know what she was going to do because she was so old.

H: Was the Holland family in Virginia?

C: Yes, they went to a Christian church. One exception however, this uncle was going to a Methodist church then. He was married twice and his first wife died on the neighboring farm that they farmed together. The farmer next to him, her husband died. Well, in the meantime, my uncle married her and they combined the farms.

H: I am going to ask you to make an evaluation of your uncle's faith and conviction there. Would you say that perhaps it was because of his Christian faith that he was as kind and considerate to these people?

C: I figured that, that would have a good bit to do with it, yes.

H: Do you remember other folks around the community that had similar relationships with their blacks?

- C: No, I don't know much about the neighbors, except there was one family close there, but he was an old man and he used to talk with my grandfather. They were both real old, a man by the name of White. I used to hear him say "I don't know what they are keeping us here for."
- H: Was this Mr. White, you say that he was about as old as your grandfather, in the Civil War too?
- C: I don't know, I couldn't say. He might have been, but I knew that they used to go back and forth.
- H: Your observations of Mr. White then, he was kind towards the blacks?
- C: Yes, I know he was, but I don't think they treated them mean, well there might have been some. It's just like here, there are people that are mean and other people that aren't. They just seemed to get along alright when I was around there.
- H: Then it would be safe to say that this was an example of how they were treated, but it could be found that they were treated much differently in some other circumstances?
- C: Oh yes, in some other circumstances.
- H: This was pretty much a rural situation wasn't it?
- C: Oh yes, very rural, it was all farms around there.
- H: Was Suffolk the big town?
- C: Yes, the biggest town closest to there.

END OF INTERVIEW